**Turning a challenge into an opportunity**

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When COVID-19 first appeared in the city of Wuhan, China in November 2019, most of the western countries were seen criticising the Chinese government for poor governance and laboratory failure. However, when this menace first hit the western shores, China was still the centre of criticism.

Now, some eighteen months down the line, China is rescuing the world with its knowledge on the subject and the development of the varieties of vaccines, which are being flown across the globe. Pakistan, no doubt is one of the beneficiaries of Chinese generosity, perhaps because it stood by China when the whole world was criticising it, and secondly, due to its long-standing friendship of strategic significance and thirdly because Pakistan participated in the trials of Chinese vaccines in the development phase.

How did China turn around this unique challenge into an opportunity to win over the world? China is one of the oldest civilisations and cherishes its rich cultural heritage. The people and the government of China love to read and learn from Confucius and Sun Tzu. During the pandemic, the Chinese government reopened the pages of Sun Tzu’s precepts: “Opportunities multiply as they are seized.” From then on, the Chinese worked relentlessly on multiple fronts: (a) Arrest the spread of the disease through a strict lockdown (It was reported by western media that people were physically locked inside their homes and food and medicines were dropped at their doorsteps). (b) Build capacity to handle the patients—temporary structures were created overnight as isolation and treatment centres; perhaps only the Chinese could do that at that speed and vigour, because bureaucratic approvals were not involved. (c) Control the number of deaths by aggressive treatment and extreme care—the western media reported that Chinese are not testing enough, nor are they reporting the number of dead properly. (d) Develop the vaccine as soon as possible—the government supported research laboratories in the process without any political or bureaucratic hurdles. So far, Chinese companies have developed and tested Sinovac, CoronaVac, Sinopharm, and CanSino Biologics. These vaccines are already approved and deployed in a number of countries with promising results. However, many more are in the test and trials stage.

[Bangladesh seeks UN intervention to end Rohingya crisis](https://nation.com.pk/18-Jun-2021/bangladesh-seeks-un-intervention-to-end-rohingya-crisis)

Till date, China has reported less than 5000 deaths as against 572,000 in the United States, 391,000 in Brazil, 127,000 in UK, 195,000 in India, 119,000 in Italy and 103,000 in France, to mention a few.

The pandemic hit the Chinese economy first due to strict lockdown measures and growth dropped to 2.3 percent in the first half of 2020 but recovered towards the end of the year to nearly 6.5 percent again. Likewise the manufacturing sector has recovered due to effective governmental support for the businesses in the wake of COVID-19 measures. According to Karishma Vaswani, “China’s economy has seen a strong rebound, while the rest of the world struggles with anaemic demand, millions of job losses, and businesses shutting down.” China is expected to overtake the US as the world’s largest economy by 2028, earlier than initial estimates.

However, the problem with the US and its western allies is that they do not like Chinese examples, and therefore do not want to learn from Chinese experience and expertise. Pakistan and Pakistanis have no such apprehensions. The people of Pakistan participated in the tests and trials of the Chinese vaccines and today they are reaping the benefits of that support. Sinovac and Sinopharm are used in all government’s purpose-built COVID Centres and there are no complaints of any reaction or side effects so far. Moreover, M/s Searle Company has concluded an agreement with China’s Livzon Mapharm Inc., for manufacturing novel corona vaccine in Pakistan. Also, Pakistan has started producing the Chinese CanSino vaccine locally. It is important to mention that the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) has approved four vaccines for use in the country—China’s Sinopharm and Cansino, Russia’s Sputnik V and Oxford University’s AstraZeneca.

[Israel to send 1M vaccine doses to Palestinian Authority in swap deal](https://nation.com.pk/18-Jun-2021/israel-to-send-1m-vaccine-doses-to-palestinian-authority-in-swap-deal)

There is no doubt that COVID-19 has shaken the world, particularly the developed world with the level of devastation it has caused in their society and badly exposed the health system. It remains the best in the world, and I am certain that policymakers in western capitals could learn from Chinese strategy of converting an unknown challenge into an opportunity to identify the gaps in the systems of governance, particularly old homes.

India at this time needs to be helped and it must accept the support announced by China, Russia, and Pakistan, even if it has politico-military conflicts with its neighbouring countries. India must not wait for US support due to an emergency-like situation in the streets of some of the large cities which are running out of oxygen, hospital beds, ventilators, and even places for cremations.